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THE REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL SYSTEMS

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The readjustment of school organization to the present social and economic conditions is worthy of consideration. On every hand additions to the curriculum mark the concessions which are being made to vocational interests. These additions, however, generally leave untouched the common divisions into elementary and secondary schools of eight and four years respectively, and the present practice of grading on averages, and of advancing the pupils by yearly or semiannual promotions based on such grading.

It is not to be doubted, however, that widespread dissatisfaction exists among educators with what are seen to be purely artificial distinctions and inconsequential practices. More clearly formulated *purposes* are determining the selection of subject-matter, the adoption of methods of instruction, and particularly the arrangement of plans of grading and promotion. In all parts of the country this dissatisfaction is to be noted by the thoughtful experiments which are being inaugurated in school management. In the following pages a few of these experiments are briefly described.

All efforts to reduce preventable retardation are worthy of careful study. Wherever "special classes," so called, classes for mental defectives or delinquents, or ungraded classes of any description are organized, this desirable end is brought nearer realization. These classes, however, are so commonly found in school systems today that no detailed mention of them need be made.

The grading system has been quite generally based on the supposition that a certain amount of school work should be accomplished in a definite period, and the *unit* of time has commonly been one year. Under this system, the pupil who is "retarded" usually, albeit with numerous individual exceptions, repeats the entire year's work.

While in many cities promotions are now made semiannually and elements of flexibility are being introduced into school grading

generally, it is probably within the facts to consider yearly promotions to be the plan which commonly obtains in the United States. In a few instances only have efforts been made to modify this practice radically. One of these examples is cited herewith.

PORTLAND, OREGON

The systems of promotion which have been in operation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and St. Louis, Missouri, for so many years are too well known to require more than a passing mention. Less widely known is the plan which is followed in Portland, Oregon. Regarding grading and promotions in the schools in that city, Mr. Frank Rigler, city superintendent of schools, says:

The course of study is divided into fifty-four parts, numbered continuously from one to fifty-four. The time is divided into terms of five months each, promotions taking place regularly at the end of each term. Three terms, or one and one-half years, constitute what we for convenience call a cycle. Classes are permitted to progress at whatever rate is found suitable to their powers. But the two standard rates are three parts per term for second divisions and four parts per term for first divisions.

The normal class interval at the beginning of a cycle is three parts of the course of study, measured not in time but in work. In large schools the class interval is often only two parts of the course. Sometimes in the lower classes only one part of the course.

At the beginning of each cycle, any group of pupils who have reached the same point in the course of study is separated into a first and second division. By the end of the first term, the first divisions will have passed over four parts of the course of study, and the second divisions over only three. By the end of the second term, the first divisions will have passed over eight parts of the course of study and the second divisions over only six. At the end of the third term the first divisions will have advanced twelve parts and the second divisions only nine. It will be seen now that each first division has overtaken the second division next above it. In the new cycle these two divisions are united and again divided. In this redivision, some of the pupils that did first-division work during the preceding cycle are put into a second division, and some who did second-division work are put into a first division.

In every school-room there are two divisions progressing at different rates. Where the more advanced is a first division, the classes are said to be "diverging," i.e., the interval between them is increasing. Early in the cycle this is the condition in most school-rooms, but in the third term of the cycle, we try as far as possible to have first divisions roomed with second divisions which are in advance of them. Such classes are said to be "converging," i.e., the interval between them is diminishing.

In the exigencies of rooming it is sometimes necessary to make up a "division" by taking the stronger members of a first division and classing them with the weaker ones of a second division who are one or one and one-half parts in advance of them. In such cases the division commences its work at the point already reached by its stronger members. The interval of one or one and one-half parts can thus be passed over very rapidly, being review for the weak ones and new work for very strong pupils.

Such emergency divisions, however, do not usually continue more than a term. By that time the strong pupils have outstripped the weak and they are then classed with the strongest members of the same second divisions whose weaker members they have just passed, their place being taken by the middle section of the same division.

An important feature of our system of classification is promotion by subjects instead of by "averages." A pupil may do "first" division work in one subject and "second" division work in another. Sometimes he will have to recite part of his work in one room and part in another, but no inconvenience need result from this. In fact, it is an advantage in rooming, as we can make his headquarters in the less crowded of the two rooms.

Under the Portland plan, a pupil who does first division work during his entire life in the elementary school will be prepared for high-school work in seven years. A pupil who does second division work all the time will require nine years to complete the elementary course. We find that perhaps a third of the pupils require this time and they get it with us, not by failing once or twice and repeating some particular part of the course, but by doing somewhat less work each term for the entire nine years. Our first division proceeds one and one-third times as rapidly as our second division, or one and one-eighth times as rapidly as the normal class in the orthodox eight-grades system.

Fully half of our pupils are able to maintain this rate throughout the course, without detriment to their health and without much home study. A considerable number do part first and second division work, and thus complete the elementary course in seven and one-half, eight, or eight and one-half years.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

The vacation period is coming to be regarded as an opportunity for giving such additional attention to retarded children as will permit them to regain their grade and thus to avoid the discouragement of repeating the work of a semester or a year.

Experiments intended to reduce the amount of retardation in both the elementary and the high school were inaugurated in the Chicago public schools in the summer of 1911.

There were administered in connection with three of the vacation schools, although in a measure independently of them, what

were styled "Review Schools." Classes were formed for grades five, six, seven, and eight, and were open to children recommended by principals of the elementary schools as being able to profit by such work.

To be eligible for membership in these classes a child must have failed of promotion the preceding year, but at the same time must have shown some ability to recover his grade by the extra work of the summer session. The measure of success was to be determined by an examination given by the principal of the elementary school on the return of the children in September.

Three such review schools were in session for six weeks of the summer vacation on four mornings a week from nine till twelve o'clock.

Summer high-school classes, for pupils who had failed during the preceding year in one or more studies, were organized in the Wendell Phillips High School.

The classes received two lessons a day in each subject, with a study hour between, and were thus enabled, with ten recitations a week, to cover in five weeks the work of a quarter, or what amounted to a complete review of a semester's work.

No pupil was permitted to enter the school for the purpose of doing advanced work.

Partly as an experiment and partly because of financial conditions, a tuition fee of \$10 was charged each pupil. This fact is thought to have some bearing on the measure of success attending the venture. Two hundred and ten pupils were registered in these classes and 89 per cent passed in one or more subjects.

The tuition fees practically covered all expenses.

It is expected that the review schools will become an integral part of the Chicago school system.

CLEVELAND, OHIO

Beginning with the summer of 1911, the entire school system of Cleveland was reorganized on a quarterly plan of four terms of approximately three months each, there being only a brief vacation between the quarters.

While this reorganization involves many educational questions,

it is of interest in this connection because the schools were open during the first summer quarter only to pupils who were below grade. There were about 10,000 such pupils in the city, about 5,000 of whom enrolled for the summer quarter. This, therefore, may properly be considered another plan for reducing retardation.

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

Examples of a more fundamental reorganization of school systems are to be found in the plans of Berkeley, Cal., and Concord, N.H.

The plan of organization described below has been in operation in the Berkeley schools for two years with marked and salutary effect on the retention of pupils.

The units of the school system are three in number instead of the conventional two. The first, the Elementary School, comprises the first six years; the second, the Lower High School, the seventh, eighth, and ninth years; and the third, the Upper High School, the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth years.

While satisfactory completion of the work of the first or second unit confers eligibility for the next higher grade, the main emphasis is not placed on *preparation*, with the higher school as a goal. Instead, the work of each unit is based on the assumption that *all* the children *might* leave school at the end of that particular cycle of work. Mr. Frank F. Bunker, superintendent of city schools, says that he is willing to contend that such a plan results, "not only in the best possible preparation for those who drop out, but likewise the best possible preparation for those who go on from grade to grade, finally entering the university." In a report to the Board of Education recommending the adoption of the plan, Mr. Bunker said:

An examination of this plan will convince one, I think, that the division of the grades into three groups is a much more natural one than the arrangement under which we are now working with a division of the grades into two groups only.

Statistics show that the masses are held in school no longer than through the fifth grade, and that at the close of the fifth grade they drop out in very large numbers, which means, educationally, that whatever is to be taught to the masses must be given in the first five or six years.

In the schools comprising this group of the first six years, I would have the course of study uniform for all children and somewhat narrow in its scope. I would see to it that emphasis is placed on those things which the masses must have if they get on at all. I would see to it that, whether or not anything else were gotten, at least the children learn how to read, how to write, how to use their own language, both orally and in written form, how to perform with facility and accuracy the simple operations of arithmetic and of accounting, and I would also see to it that in these first six years they get somewhat of a sympathetic knowledge of their city, state, and national government, and that they also learn the elementary things about sanitation and health conditions which everybody needs to know, not only to protect themselves as individuals, but to protect society as well. I would select from the corps for work in these first six years teachers who are particularly adapted to handling children of this early age and to inculcating the content which I have just outlined.

In the "Introductory High Schools" there would be congregated the seventh, eighth, and ninth years. These years comprise another natural group, inasmuch as children would enter it at the beginning of the period of adolescence, when by nature they naturally crave an opportunity to dip into a wide range of subjects and activities, which is Nature's way of insuring a freedom of choice in determining occupation and somewhat of intelligence in the same. I would have certain prescribed subjects for this group, but in addition thereto would permit as many electives as possible, thus making it unnecessary, as at present, for every child in the seventh and eighth grades to take exactly the same work as every other child. In contrast to the work of the first six years, I should wish to see the work of this group made exceedingly rich in content and variety, and particularly in human interest. I should hope to see the work of this group relate very closely to life and be as far away as possible from that which is purely academic in education. I should wish much emphasis placed on learning how to study, how to use the library, how to get material from the same with expedition and with judgment. If a child foresees that he wants to take German or Latin in the high school proper, I would wish him to begin these languages when he enters this group and thus have six years of work in the same before he enters college instead of four as according to our present arrangement. I should wish to see the work of this group shaped up to make a more easy transition from the work of the elementary grades to the departmental work of the high school. In line with this I should wish teachers assigned to work in these grades who have a broad culture and wide experience in teaching in the grades.

By an arrangement of this kind it would seem that the work of the high school proper could be made more intensive than it is at the present time with higher standards of scholarship and more rigid requirements than at present obtain, and without working any hardship upon the young people who enter the same, for it would seem that if this work which I have outlined be carefully

and efficiently done, that the incoming student will have developed a much more serious attitude toward his work than obtains at the present time; will have oriented himself better, so far as his subjects are concerned, and that the break will not be so great or so discouraging as with the plan under which we are now working.

It is evident that the crucial point of this unique organization is to be found in the Lower High School, and the plan commends itself for the reason that this period of school life coincides very closely with that period of youth which is, perhaps, the most difficult for the teacher to understand and, therefore, the one where the pupils suffer most from misdirected effort on their own part and also on the part of their teachers. In this system of schools the major purpose of the intermediate unit is one of adjustment.

Among other opportunities offered in this "trying out" period is the possibility of selecting studies which appeal to the awakening vocational interests of some of the pupils. Thus far the vocational subjects offered have been commercial rather than industrial, but, in such a community as Berkeley, this is perhaps all that could reasonably be expected in the second year of such an important transition.

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

The reorganized school system of Concord consists of three units or groups, which are numbered in the reverse order of the grades or years in school.

Group 3, the elementary group, comprises the first six grades; Group 2, the lower of the secondary groups, comprises the seventh and eighth years, and Group 1, the ninth, tenth, and eleventh years, or the high school proper.

The plan is thus similar to that of Berkeley, with the important difference that, by the Concord plan, an attempt is made to save a year's time. It is believed that this is made possible by eliminating reduplication which so frequently obtains in the last elementary and the first high-school year of the traditional school system.

As carried out, the plan actually provides greater opportunity for differentiation than is found in Berkeley, as will be seen by referring to the following course of study for 1911-12.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS—GROUP 3

		Reading	Spelling	Arith- metic	Language	History	Geog- raphy	Hygiene	Penman- ship
6th Yr.	6	L	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
		K	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
5th Yr.	5	J	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
		I	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
4th Yr.	4	H	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
		G	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
3d Yr.	3	F	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
		E	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
2d Yr.	2	D	"	"	*	"	*	"	"
		C	"	"	*	"	*	"	"
1st Yr.	1	B	"	*	"	"	*	"	"
		A	"	*	"	"	*	"	"

* Shows that the subject is not taken in this group.

KINDERGARTEN—ELECTIVE

Manual training—Woodwork, classes K and L—for boys.

Sewing, classes, I, J, K, L—for girls.

Music and drawing—All classes throughout the entire elementary course.

Ethics and nature-study—One period a week for fifteen minutes in *all* classes to K.

Physical exercises—Throughout the entire course.

No pupil below the age of five years can enter class A.

The age of pupils for kindergartens is from four to six years.

Parents are urged to continue children in the Kindergarten until the age of six years, because those pupils entering *class A* at five years of age are usually retarded a year on account of immaturity.

Parents are also urged to continue their children in school through class L, rather than send them to work before completing the elementary-school course.

Promotions—The class letters of each group represent nineteen weeks of school work. At the end of this time promotion to the succeeding class occurs. The figures indicate the years of school work. The years written at the left of each group indicate the number of the year in that group. It is often desirable for pupils to repeat class work of nineteen weeks, and parents are urged to co-operate with the teachers whenever this repetition seems necessary.

HIGH SCHOOL—GROUP 2

			Course I	Course II	Course III
Second Year	8	P	English 5 Algebra 5 Ancient History 5 <i>Choose One</i> Latin 5 French 5	English 5 Algebra 5 Commercial History 5 Commercial Geography 4 Penmanship (2) 1	English 5 Algebra 5 Ancient History 5 Mechanical Drawing, boys (4) 2 Free-hand Drawing, girls Advanced Wood-working, Cabinet Making, Turning, boys (8) 4 Domestic Science, Sewing, girls
			"	"	"
First Year	7	N	English Literature 5 Algebra 5 Latin 5 U.S. History 5 Manual Training 3	English Literature 5 Algebra 5 English Grammar and Composition 5 U.S. History 5 Penmanship (2) 1 Manual Training—Cooking—Sewing 3	English Literature 5 Algebra 5 English Grammar 5 U.S. History 5 Penmanship 2 Elementary Cabinet Work, boys 3 Sewing, Cooking, girls
			English Literature 5 Arithmetic 5 English Grammar and Composition 5 U.S. History 5 Manual Training, Cooking and Sewing (4) 2	English Literature 5 Arithmetic 5 English Grammar and Composition 5 U.S. History 5 Penmanship (2) 1 Manual Training—Cooking—Sewing (4) 2	English Literature 5 Arithmetic 5 English Grammar 5 U.S. History 5 Penmanship (2) 1 Manual Training, boys (4) 2 Sewing, Cooking, girls
		M			

Military drill is required twice a week of all the boys in group 1.

Music may be elected one period a week in any course in group 1. Required in all other groups.

Drawing may be elected two periods a week in courses I and II.

Manual training and domestic science may be elected two periods a week in addition to work in courses I and II.

All electives are subject to arrangement of program.

The arrangement of studies in courses is designed to assist students in choosing their subjects so that each may follow out some definite line of work.

Students who intend to enter college should decide before entering class N.

Students are expected to take the full work of one course beginning with class N and thus secure a diploma.

To secure promotion to class N, 10 points are required; to class O, 20 points; to class P, 30; to class Q, 40; to class R, 50; to class S, 60; to class T, 70; to class U, 80; to class V, 90; to graduate, 100 points.

The numerals following subjects in the courses show the number of weekly recitations and the value in points of each study.

HIGH SCHOOL GROUP 1

		Course I. Classical and English	Course II. Commercial	Course III. Mechanic Arts
Third Year	II	English 4	English 4	English 4
		U.S. History and Civics 4	U.S. History and Civics 4	U.S. History and Civics 4
		<i>Choose Three</i>	Bookkeeping $\frac{1}{2}$ yr. 4	Chemistry 5
		Latin 5	Banking $\frac{1}{2}$ yr. 4	Mechanical Drawing, boys (4) 2
Third Year	V	Greek 5	Economics $\frac{1}{2}$ yr. 4	Free-Hand Drawing, girls
		French 5	Commercial Law $\frac{1}{2}$ yr. 4	Machine Shop Practice, Advance Mechanics, boys (8) 4
		German 5	<i>Choose One</i>	Household Economy, Sewing, girls
		Review Mathematics 4	French 5	<i>Choose One</i>
		Advance Mathematics 4	Chemistry 5	French 5
		Chemistry 5	Stenography 4	Review Mathematics 4
			Typewriting (4) 2	
Second Year	U	"	"	"
Second Year	IO	English 5	English 5	English 5
		<i>Choose Three</i>	Bookkeeping 5	Physics 5
		Latin 5	<i>Choose Two</i>	Mechanical Drawing, boys (4) 2
		Greek 5	French 5	Free-hand Drawing, girls
		French 5	Physics 5	Machine Shop Practice, Elementary Mechanics, boys (8) 4
		German 5	Stenography 4	Household Economy, Sewing, girls
		Physics 5	Typewriting (4) 2	French 5
		English History 5		English History 5
Second Year	S	"	"	"

HIGH SCHOOL GROUP 1—*Continued*

		Course I. Classical and English	Course II. Commercial	Course III. Mechanic Arts
First Year	9	English 5 Geometry 5 <i>Choose Two</i> Latin 5 Greek 5 French 5 Mediaeval and Modern History 5 Biology 5	English 5 Geometry 5 Commercial Arithmetic $\frac{1}{2}$ yr. 5 Bookkeeping $\frac{1}{2}$ yr. <i>Choose One</i> French 5 Mediaeval and Modern History 5	English 5 Geometry 5 Mechanical Drawing, boys (4) 2 Free-hand Drawing, girls Pattern-Making, Forging, F'dry Practice, boys (8) 4 Domestic Science, Sewing, girls <i>Choose One</i> French 5 Mediaeval and Modern History 5 Biology 5
	Q	"	"	"

In commenting on the plan Mr. Rundlett, superintendent of schools, says:

Through the first six years of this course the studies remain practically uniform for all pupils, the main idea being to teach them how to read, to write, to use the mother-tongue properly, the essentials of history and geography, how to take care of their bodies and to live in cleanliness and purity—in short, those things which all people should know to make the best use of their lives. Upon completing the work of group 3, the student may take up the work outlined for group 2, making his choice of approved high-school courses or pursuing still farther what are commonly called the three R's.

This change comes at a time in the pupil's life when he seeks variety. If he forecasts a college course he may have five years of study instead of four. If he wishes a more practical course he may choose a commercial or a mechanic-arts course. In these grades emphasis will be placed upon teaching the pupil to become self-reliant, how to study as well as how to recite, and to get material for his work with dispatch and with good judgment. He will be introduced to departmental teaching, handled by teachers who make a study of individual natures, and have the approval of the state department as being qualified for the work, thus securing the benefit of teaching backed by broad culture and by individual grade experience.

In the high school proper, group 1, advantage will be manifest in a decreased

enrolment so that the general atmosphere will be relieved of the confusion of numbers.

Eventually, more rigid requirements and better standards of scholarship should result, because entering pupils will have had two years of serious preparation along lines of high-school work.

This scheme is combined with semiannual promotion throughout the entire course.